

McMurray, William
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War 1812
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McMurray, William

1804

1. Sermon Preached before the American
Colonization Society. 1825 ms
2. Remarks on the Letters of Domesticus 1827 ms
3. Sermon on the Death of Colonel Rutgers 1830 ms
4. Sermon on the Death of Aaron Hand 1831 ms
5. Sermon before the American Board of
Foreign Missions 1833. ms

OVER McMurray, Wm., b. in Salem, 1784; U.C. 1804, tutor in U.C. 1806-7, 1. Assoc. Ref. 1808; (Lansingburgh, 1808-11,) Rhinebeck Flats, 1812-20, N.Y.C., Market St., 1820-35, d. S.T.D. by C.C. 1852; D.D. by U.C. 1853.

Few have evinced a greater purity, loveliness of character, consistency, and fidelity in every part of Christian and ministerial duty, and few have displayed a more instructive, peaceful death-bed. An affectionate confidence and respect from the whole community centered on him, and he died lamented and honored by all.

His parents were eminent for their piety, and wished him to preach the gospel, and much of his superior ripeness in piety was derived from that unction which pervaded the walk and conversation of his parents. Discretion, soundness of judgment, a sweet and soothing influence in his manners and conduct peculiarly his own, were prominent characteristics. His power was often felt, not only in calming the troubled mind, but in scenes of debate; where warmth of argument was rising too high, his voice would fall like oil to calm the rising tempest. He was kind toward all, affectionate to those he loved, and thus qualified peculiarly for usefulness among the young of his flock whose hearts were allured to religion by his friendly smile. Of his death, says Dr. Mathews: "I never saw a death-bed scene of such varied joys, such wonderfully enlarged views of divine truth and of the promises which reveal it, such an entire superiority to every earthly tie and feeling. His spirit often seemed to have soared away so far toward heaven as to have lost all view of earthly cares, and to be waiting with its eyes fixed upward, and upward only, for the signal that would call it to its heavenly home."—See *Sprague's Annals*.

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Rev. WILLIAM McMURRAY, A.M. D.D. Tut.U.C., 1804, of Rhinebeck, N.Y., was a member
of the Adelpic Society. (Died: 1835)
Adelpic Catalogue 1830

A sketch of the life of WILLIAM MURRAY appears in the *Annals of the American*

Pulpit, Vol. 9

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A man pre-eminent for piety and wisdom, whose death was a triumph. See Manual, 1902.

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CLASS OF 1804

WILLIAM MC MURRAY

Dr. William McMurray was born in Salem, N. Y., July 6, 1784, and was a son of Elder Robert Mc Murray of the congregation of Rev. Thomas Clark. He prepared for college at Washington Academy, and was graduated from Union College in 1804, and that same year was appointed principal of Washington Academy. This placed him in a very trying position--a new teacher among old acquaintances--but he was extremely successful during his short career in that position. After the second term he concluded to commence the study of divinity. He was licensed to preach, and was ordained as pastor of the Associate Reformed Church of Lansingburg on January 10, 1810. A few years later he accepted a call from the Reformed Dutch Church at Rhinebeck, where he remained eight years, leaving there to go to a Reformed Dutch Church in New York City. Here he remained, building up a large and powerful church.

He died September 24, 1835 in the 52nd year of his age.

His spirit, in its natural mould, was one of great kindness and gentleness, his manners were distinguished by amenity and courtesy. There was blended with this the frankness which always forbade the remotest suspicion of disguise; a clear, well-balanced judgment; sound, practical sense, and great fidelity to his own convictions of right; a most unaffected humility, and a delicate and scrupulous regard for the feelings of others.

FROM The Salem Book
1896

p. 74

1804

WILLIAM McMURRAY

DIED:-In New York, on Thursday morning, the Rev. William McMurray, D.D., pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church in Market Street, aged 51 years, 2 months, and 21 days.

Albany Argus
September 28, 1835
(Monday)

CLASS OF 1804

WILLIAM McMURRAY.

Dr. McMurray was born in Salem, N. Y., in 1784; a son of Elder Robert McMurray and his wife Susanna Cowan, who were members of the congregation of Rev. Dr. Thomas Clark in Salem; prepared for college at Washington Academy; graduated at Union College in 1804, and on May 11th of that year was appointed Principal of the institution (Washington Academy) at which he had been a student.

The Trustees gave notice of his appointment, and that the school would open under his charge as Principal on May 21st, with the assurance, that the community "might place the fullest confidence in the ability and fidelity of the teacher." The term commenced at the time appointed, and Mr. McMurray, as a teacher, fully met all the assurances that the Trustees had made in his behalf, though he came under circumstances usually not very favorable to a new teacher--he came to teach among old acquaintances--in his native place and among students with whom he had been previously an associate. He was the first Principal of the Academy who had been previously one of its students, and was a success. The fact has often occurred since, and with like success.

The Academy, owing to the burning of its edifice, had at the time no permanent shelter for its defenceless head, and during this year, and for some time, the scholars were taught on the second floor of the building which then stood on the corner now occupied by the Blanchard building, and on the erection of the latter, was removed one lot toward the north, and afterward used for a printing office, book store and book bindery by Dodd & Stevenson.

From the good work done by Mr. McMurray, as handed down by the traditions of the institution, it is evident that had he made teaching a profession, he would have shone forth as a brilliant light in that department; but with him, as with the majority of teachers, he did not intend its permanent use, but only as a means to attain his education for a preacher of the Gospel.

He concluded to commence the immediate study of divinity, and terminated his connection with the institution at the end of the second term.

He pursued his studies in theology under the charge of the Rev. John M. Mason, D. D. During the years 1806 and 1807 he held the position of tutor in Union College. He was licensed to preach by the Associate Reformed Presbytery of Washington at a meeting held at Salem, New York. He received a call from the Associate Reformed church at Lansingburgh, where he was ordained on June 10, 1810. The Rev. John Dunlap preached the sermon, and the Rev. Alexander Proudfit delivered the charge to the minister and congregation. "Here he remained," says Dr. Sprague, "three years, eminently useful and beloved."

CLASS OF 1804--William McMurray---2

He then accepted a call from the Reformed Dutch church at Rhinebeck, where he remained about eight years, having a very successful pastorate. He was called thence to the Reformed Dutch church in Market street, the city of New York, which he accepted, and was installed there in the summer of 1820. Here he remained, building up a large and powerful church numbering over five hundred communicants at the time disease took him from his labors, terminating in his death on the 24th of September, 1835, in the fifty-second year of his age. Union College had in 1823 honored the University by conferring on him the degree of D. D. He was the executive officer of several religious organizations, overseer of the College of New Jersey, and a member of the council of New York University.

While at Rhinebeck he was married to Miss Esther, daughter of Peter Rutgers, by whom he had twelve children. She survived him, dying at Newburgh on March 22, 1842.

Among their children was Hon. William McMurray, elected for the city of New York a Member of Assembly in 1841, and was re-elected in 1842 and 1843; member of the Senate in 1852 and 1853, and one of the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of New York in 1864 and 1865.

History of Washington County, N. Y. pp. 117-119

The Gibson Papers

Compiled by William H. Hill

Fort Edward, N. Y.

1932.

Son of Robert and Susanna Cowan McMurray was born on the 3d of July, 1784. He was educated at the Salem Washington Academy, was graduated from Union College in 1804, and in the same year commenced the study of theology under the Rev. Dr. John Mabon, of New York. He was ordained and installed over the Associate Reformed Church in Lansingburgh in 1808, where he remained till the year 1811, when he was called to the Reformed Dutch Church at Rhinebeck, and in August, 1820, he became the pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church in Market Square, New York City, which he retained till his death, which occurred on the 25th day of September, 1835. In early life he received the degree of D. D. from Union College.

He married Esther Kissam in New York in 1811. They had a numerous family, most of whom died in early life. Of those who reached adult life, we would mention Cornelia, who married Philip Burrows and lived and died in Paris, France; William, Jr, who represented his district in the Assembly and also in the Senate of the state, and died June 1868; John, who served in the War of the Rebellion and was breveted Colonel for meritorious service at the siege of Knoxville, Tenn. He died in France. There are but two of his children living, Esther and Henry R.

The Salem Book
p. 65

WILLIAM McMURRAY, D.D.*

1809—1835.

WILLIAM McMURRAY was born in Salem, Washington County, N. Y., on the 3d of July, 1783. His father, Robert McMurray, was descended from an old Scotch family, a branch of which passed over to Ireland, where Robert was born. He migrated to this country about the commencement of the American Revolution, in company with several other families distinguished for their great moral worth, and purchased the place in Salem on which his son William was born. He was a man of fervent piety, and was, to the day of his death, a Ruling Elder in the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Salem. With his family and neighbours, he encountered the difficulties and perils incident to a pioneer settler, and was among the volunteers who witnessed the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga.

William McMurray was the youngest son of his parents. From his earliest years, he evinced a purity of character and a deep toned religious sentiment that marked him, even in childhood, as one destined to the sacred office. Having gone through his preparatory course at the Academy in his native place, he entered Union College, from which he graduated with honour in the year 1804, in the same class with Bishop Brownell and the Rev. Drs. Mathews and McAuley. Shortly after his graduation he went to New York and commenced the study of Divinity under the Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, with whom he remained as a Theological student till 1809, when he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Church, at Salem, N. Y. During part of the year 1806 he was a Tutor in Union College.

Shortly after his licensure he was settled as Pastor of an Associate Reformed Church at Lansingburg, N. Y., where he remained about three years, eminently useful and beloved. In 1812 he accepted a call from the Reformed Dutch Church at Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, then one of the most flourishing and influential churches in the State. About the same time he was happily married to Esther, daughter of Peter Rutgers Kissam, Esq., of New York.

He continued Pastor of the Church at Rhinebeck till 1820. Here his ministry was eminently successful; and persons of all classes and conditions revered him as a Pastor and loved him as a Friend.

From Rhinebeck he was called to the Reformed Dutch Church in Market Street, New York. It cost him a severe struggle to break away from those cherished associations which had been the result of a happy ministry of eight years; but he took counsel of the indications of Providence, and he could not doubt that it was his duty to accept the invitation. Accordingly, he was installed Pastor of the Market Street Church in the summer of 1820.

In the year 1823 he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the College at which he had received his education.

At the time of his settlement in New York, the church of which he had charge was situated in the (then) suburbs of the city; and the population, in its immediate neighbourhood, was chiefly of the poorest, and to some extent the most vicious, class. The church edifice had been erected by a few wealthy individuals,

* MS. from his son, Hon. Wm. McMurray.

and the congregation consisted of a mere handful. He, however, engaged in his work with most untiring zeal, and was soon permitted to witness a rich blessing upon his labours. He generally preached three times on the Sabbath, attended strictly to the Catechetical and Bible Class exercises, lectured twice during the week, and performed, with great vigilance and fidelity, all the more private duties of a Pastor. The success that attended his ministry may be inferred from the fact that, at the time of his death, his church numbered between five and six hundred communicants. He was repeatedly invited to other spheres of labour, in which there would have been a less draft upon his physical energies, but he was convinced that he was in the place in which Providence had fixed him, and that he had no right to abandon it. To the warnings of his friends that he was overtaking his strength he paid alas! too little heed; and he kept on labouring, even in his weakness, and amidst the desolations of the pestilence, until God's Providence issued a command to him to desist, to which he was obliged to submit. A violent Typhus Fever, acting upon a constitution already enfeebled by excessive labour, left him in a state of debility from which he was never able to rise. He died on the 24th of September, 1835, in the fifty-second year of his age.

An affecting incident occurred on his death bed, which was strikingly illustrative of his benevolent spirit. During an early period of his ministry he had found, in the course of his philanthropic labours, the family of a man broken in fortune and spirit, who were in a state of absolute suffering for want of food and clothing. He instantly relieved their immediate distress; and, by his subsequent assistance and that of some charitable individuals associated with him, the man was furnished with the means to remove with his family to the Far West. Many years afterwards, and, as if by special direction of Providence, while Dr. McMurray was on his dying bed, and only a day or two previous to his decease, a gentleman begged earnestly at the door to be permitted to see him, and, being informed that the physicians had directed that no visitors should be admitted to the patient's chamber, he showed so much distress at the refusal that his request was finally granted. This was the man who had so long before been relieved by the kindly aid of the Doctor and his friends. He had travelled more than a thousand miles, and had been congratulating himself, on his journey, that he should once more have an opportunity of seeing the friend to whom he felt that he owed more than to any other person on earth; but, alas! he found him dying. Throwing himself on his knees, by the bedside, he poured forth his gratitude and his sorrow, and begged the blessing of him whose friendship had marked a bright spot in his history and seemed to bring down upon him the smile of Heaven. He had prospered ever since; had not only thriven in his worldly circumstances, but held an important judicial station in his district. "All this," exclaimed he, with unutterable emotion,—"all this I owe to you!" Dr. McMurray supplicated for him a blessing, and only remarked,—"Oh how unworthy am I, a sinful man, to listen to expressions like these."

Dr. McMurray was well known in the walks of public benevolence, and lent a hearty influence in aid of most of the great charities of his day. He presided over several religious institutions, and was Overseer of the College of New Jersey, and a member of the Council of the New York University.

Mrs. McMurray survived her husband, and died in 1842. They had eleven children. Their eldest son (*William*) is a lawyer in the city of New York, and has been much in civil life.

Besides various contributions to periodicals, Dr. McMurray published the following: A Sermon preached before the American Colonization Society, 1825. Remarks on the Letters of Domestics, 1827.—A Sermon on the Death of Colonel Rutgers, 1830.—A Sermon on the Death of Aaron Hand, 1831.—A Sermon before the American Board of Foreign Missions, 1833.

FROM THE REV. THOMAS DEWITT, D.D.

NEW YORK, APRIL 25, 1849.

My dear Sir: My acquaintance with the late Dr. McMurray commenced in 1812, at the period of my first settlement in the ministry at Hopewell, Dutchess County, when he was Pastor of the Reformed Dutch Church at Rhinebeck Flats, in the same County, where he had been for a short time settled. We were members of the same Classis, and enjoyed frequent ministerial intercourse, with, I believe, growing mutual personal friendship. He removed to this city about 1820, and I in 1827. Our intercourse, which had been less frequent during the intervening period, was now renewed in greater intimacy, and continued till the time of his death. My recollections of him are exceedingly pleasant, and he often comes to my remembrance as a fine model of Christian and ministerial character, in the various relations of private, domestic and social life.

It was his privilege to be placed, by the circumstances of his birth and education, in such associations, and under such influences, as were peculiarly favourable to the early formation and growth of Christian character. The religious instruction and government of the family, the evangelical and successful ministry of the late excellent Dr. Proudfit; under which he was brought up, and the religious associations of the church and place, all united to exert a salutary influence, and, it is believed, were blessed in his early youth, to his spiritual renovation, and the opening of a consistent Christian course, that proved as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. With this early training, and this gradually maturing and consistent piety, from early youth, was connected that striking harmony in the various traits of character by which he was so much distinguished. It was this rather than the prominence of any single quality, which impressed those who were brought in contact with him, and permanently attracted their affectionate regard and confidence. His spirit, in its natural mould, was one of great kindness and gentleness, and his manners were distinguished by an amenity and courtesy, which were grateful alike to persons of all ranks and classes who had intercourse with him. There was blended with this the frankness which always forbade the remotest suspicion of disguise, a clear, well-balanced judgment, sound, practical sense and great fidelity to his own convictions of right, a most unaffected humility and a delicate and scrupulous regard to the feelings of others. It was impossible to be on terms of confidential friendship with him without discovering the pervading and controlling influence of the principles and spirit of the religion of Christ in his soul. These constituted the element in which he breathed and moved; they sanctified his amiable natural traits of character; gave an exemplary consistency to his private walk, and an impressiveness to his public ministrations; and won the continued and undying attachment of his friends.

From the very commencement of his ministry he showed himself "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." His discourses were carefully prepared, were full of evangelical truth, presented in a chaste and simple style, and eminently adapted to practical usefulness. It was remarked to me, by one who had long sat under his ministry, that his preaching was uniformly excellent; that, if not, as in the case of some, occa-

and the congregation consisted of a mere handful. He, however, engaged in his work with most untiring zeal, and was soon permitted to witness a rich blessing upon his labours. He generally preached three times on the Sabbath, attended strictly to the Catechetical and Bible Class exercises, lectured twice during the week, and performed, with great vigilance and fidelity, all the more private duties of a Pastor. The success that attended his ministry may be inferred from the fact that, at the time of his death, his church numbered between five and six hundred communicants. He was repeatedly invited to other spheres of labour, in which there would have been a less draft upon his physical energies, but he was convinced that he was in the place in which Providence had fixed him, and that he had no right to abandon it. To the warnings of his friends that he was overtaking his strength he paid alas! too little heed; and he kept on labouring, even in his weakness, and amidst the desolations of the pestilence, until God's Providence issued a command to him to desist, to which he was obliged to submit. A violent Typhus Fever, acting upon a constitution already enfeebled by excessive labour, left him in a state of debility from which he was never able to rise. He died on the 24th of September, 1835, in the fifty-second year of his age.

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sionally rising to the highest order of eloquence, yet it never failed to interest and satisfy his hearers. As a Pastor, he had peculiar qualifications, and in a remarkable degree won his way to the hearts, and identified himself with the interests, of his people. And his labours were peculiarly owned and blessed by the Head of the Church. As a member of Church Judicatories, he was punctual and regular in his attendance, and he was always cordially greeted by his brethren, as one who combined, in an uncommon degree, a discriminating judgment with a forbearing and conciliatory spirit.

His death was in beautiful unison with his life. A few years before he died, he received a fall which, for a season took him off from active service. As soon as he could, he resumed his cherished labours with great ardour and devotedness; but the fall had given a shock to his constitution from which it never fully recovered; and it undoubtedly paved the way for the inroads of that disease under which he sank to the grave. It was remarked, as he prosecuted his labours, how the inner man bore up under the weakness of the outer, and how he counted not his life dear unto him that he might fulfil his ministry and finish his course with joy. He was laid aside from his labours and confined to his chamber for some months. That chamber witnessed the Christian Minister, bowing submissively beneath the hand of his Heavenly Father, cherishing the peace of Christ, casting his wife and children on the care of his Covenant God, and, with a hope laying hold on eternal life, patiently waiting for his departure to Heaven. My visits to his sick chamber always proved refreshing and profitable to me; and when, at last, he gently fell asleep, I could not for a moment doubt that it was gain for him to die.

Yours in Christian bonds,

THOMAS DEWITT.

FROM THE REV. JAMES M. MATHEWS, D.D.

New York, March 15, 1849.

My dear Friend: You have asked me to give you a brief account of the character and ministerial standing of my late friend, the Rev. Dr. McMurray. I had occasion to know him well. He was not far my senior in age, and we were in habits of constant intercourse from our childhood. We were scholars together in the same School and in the same Academy; and we were students together in the same College and in the same Theological Seminary. From the time of his removal as a Pastor to this city, we lived on terms of uninterrupted intimacy until his death; and I felt that event as a most serious bereavement.

From his earliest days there was a purity about him that put his motives beyond suspicion, in whatever he said or did. He was gifted with a discretion and soundness of judgment that made it easy for him to detect error, whether in doctrine, measures, or practice. There was a gentleness, a soothing influence in his manners and conduct, peculiarly his own; and I have often seen its power displayed amidst those scenes of debate in deliberative assemblies, where warmth in argument had risen too high, and where his voice acted like a charm to allay the rising tempest. He had a kindness towards all, and an affectionateness towards those he loved, which not only made him valued as a friend, but which also qualified him for special usefulness among the young, whose hearts can be often touched by the very smile of an affectionate Pastor. The great characteristics of his preaching were clearness in his exhibitions of truth, and a mild earnestness, which led his hearers to feel how much he desired to do them good. Such a ministry would, of course, be fruitful; and, accordingly, under his labours in the Market Street Church, the members increased from a mere handful to a number so large as to render the Church distinguished in our city for its spiritual prosperity.

I know not how far you include in your biographical sketches, or expect from your correspondents, any reference to the dying hours of the clergymen whose names you are commemorating. But there was something so peculiarly impressive in the last days of Dr. McMurray that I cannot refrain from a brief allusion to them. I never saw a death-bed scene of more varied joys, more enlarged views of the Divine truth, more ~~emphatic~~ complete superiority to every earthly tie and feeling. His spirit often seemed to have passed away so far towards Heaven as to have lost all view of earth, and to be waiting with its eyes fixed upward for the signal that would call it home. In the early part of his illness he had seasons of darkness and disquietude. A few weeks before his death he observed to me,--"I have had my conflicts, but my Saviour would not let me die, would not let me die (repeating it) till he had given me victory over all through Him who hath loved me." And a complete victory it was. He felt, to the last, a deep and abiding sense of unworthiness and short-coming, but, with it all, such a steadfast hold of the Divine promises, such an elevating sense of the pardoning grace, that, at times, I have seen his bosom heaving with the fulness of its own joys. When portions of the Bible were repeated to him, he would often exclaim,--"What light! What love! How it shines!" His favorite petition, as he approached the last hour, was the prayer of Stephen,--"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" and his last breath was seen to leave him as he repeated the Saviour's name for the last time. I can never forget the scenes of that chamber, and, often as he expressed his thanks for my visits, I always felt that I received more enjoyment than I was the means of imparting. He died as he had lived, honouring his Master, and an ornament to the Ministry.

Believe me yours truly,

J. M. Mathews.

William Mc Murray - AB - 1804

William Mc Murray 17. B.
1804